

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Richard **DUNBAR** and I am here representing Phillips County and to speak in support of SB 212.

Phillips County has large areas with BLM lands that are being targeted for monument status and possible National Bison Range. Most of these lands are just north of the CMR Wildlife Refuge.

- While FWP continues to discuss and propose plans there is no statutory guidance in existence to direct the FWP in it's actions towards wild bison. Phillips County is concerned that bison transplantation is driving bigger land use issues while excluding local interests, uses, and government.
- Phillips County is concerned that bison relocation will burden county resources. These specific burdens include:
 - Damage to private property and
 - Public safety

This bill is beneficial to counties for the following reasons :

1. It directs FWP on how it should go about transplanting and managing relocated bison.
2. It addresses all aspects of management, ranging from disease protocol to identification and containment.
3. It requires a contingency plan. If bison escape from confinement, counties are ill-equipped to address the situation. By requiring that the department have a plan, a significant burden is removed from the counties.
4. The shift of liability and cost to FWP alleviates pressures on surrounding property owners whose property may be damaged by lose bison, and relieves county costs for protecting public safety.
5. This bill embraces Montana's consistent attitude towards multiple use. When bison are introduced to public lands, multiple use conflicts arise as a lot of uses can no longer exist (recreation, motorized use, grazing, and mineral extraction). We want to preserve the most uses on the largest space possible, which this does.